

WORKERS WORLD

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Struggle for jobs comes to G-20

By Brenda Sandburg
Pittsburgh

More than 1,000 protesters marched through the streets here on Sept. 20 demanding a real jobs program, like the public works program the Roosevelt administration enacted during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

It was the first demonstration related to the G-20 summit, a gathering of Treasury officials and central bankers from 20 countries that is to take place in the city later in the week. The goal of the G-20 is to protect bank profits. The goal of the March for Jobs is to revive Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for the right of all to a job. The march was organized by the Bail Out the People Movement and the Rev. Thomas E. Smith, pastor of the Monumental Baptist Church, and endorsed by the United Steelworkers union and the United Electrical Workers.

The march garnered coverage and interest from major big-business media,

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WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL; BRENDA SANDBURG AND MONICA MOOREHEAD
Pittsburgh: Resident and child at Sept. 20 march, left; front banner March for Jobs, top; tent city, above.

Welcome Pres. Chávez Solidarity with Pres. Zelaya

Workers World welcomes President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, who will be attending the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City. The progressive movement in the city stands ready to show him rank-and-file popular solidarity.

Progressives in the United States must also find ways to express their **solidarity with another Latin American leader, President Manuel Zelaya of Honduras**. Some 86 days after an illegal military coup last June 28 forcefully removed him from his elected office and expelled him from his country, Zelaya has courageously returned to the capital, Tegucigalpa. The coup leaders suddenly found themselves confronted with his presence at the Brazilian Embassy in that city. They have cordoned off the area to prevent his supporters—that is, the vast majority of Hondurans—from greeting him. Despite the efforts of the coup regime to block Internet and cell phone transmission, news is filtering out of brutal repression against crowds welcoming Zelaya.

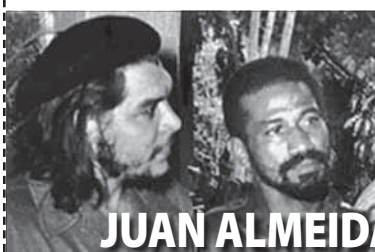
These reactionary usurpers have been trying to run that Central American country for almost three months

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Lessons of three strikes from 1934 needed now

This article is adapted from the talk, “The Lessons of the Great Depression as it Relates to the Current Capitalist Economic Crisis,” that Bryan G. Pfeifer gave at a Detroit Workers World Forum on Aug. 8.

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

The spring and summer of 2009 was the 75th anniversary of three mighty strikes either led or directly influenced by class-conscious union militants, socialists and communists that brought the bosses and bankers to their knees and ushered in a new era of labor-capital relations in the United States.



Longshore strike on West Coast

In the midst of the Great Depression the International Longshore Association (ILA), beginning on May 9, 1934, led an 83-day strike followed by a four-day general strike in San Francisco from July 2 to 5. African-American workers were decisive in winning the strike as was the anti-racist union leader, Harry Bridges. The courage, steadfastness and unity of the strikers won their main goal of an independent, union-controlled hiring hall, which put an end to the hated “shape-up” system and led to the unionization of all West Coast ports among other advances.

The West Coast locals later voted to create the International Longshore and Warehouse Union. The ILWU continues to recognize “Bloody Thursday” by shutting down all West Coast ports every July 5. This is the day in 1934 when two strikers, Nicholas Bordoio and Howard Sperry, were shot dead by the cops. Longshore workers have a history of shutting down West Coast ports for political protests, including during Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia, the fascist intervention in Spain’s civil war, to protest South Africa under the racist apartheid system and against the U.S. war on Iraq.

Toledo, Ohio: Auto-Lite

The successful Toledo Auto-Lite strike from April 12 to June 2, 1934, to win recognition of the Federal Labor Union 18384 of the American Federation of Labor, is known for a five-day running battle between approximately 6,000 strikers and 1,300 members of the Ohio National Guard, and a 20,000-strong march in support of the strikers. The American Workers Party, a socialist-oriented party, led the strike.

The workers struck the Electric Auto-Lite Company mainly to win recognition over the company union but ended up also winning wage increases, a minimum wage and provisions for arbitration and wage demands. As in Minneapolis and San Francisco, the successful Auto-Lite strike laid the basis for the widespread unionization of the city and ultimately the autoworkers in Toledo helped to build what eventually became known as the United Auto Workers.

Minneapolis Teamster’s strike

The citywide Minneapolis Teamster’s Local 574 strike began on May 16, 1934. The fundamental issue in the strike was over the open or closed shop with regard to transportation and warehouse unionization in this Midwestern city.

After facing off against cops, bosses’ goons, business union misleaders, two-faced politicians, the Citizen’s

Alliance and the National Guard, the Teamsters broke the back of the formerly open-shop citadel, Minneapolis, ushering in what became a union city.

Four workers died by cops’ and goons’ guns and/or other weapons during this strike. Illuminating features of this strike were the willingness of the strikers to independently fight on their own terms, many times physically, and also form military formations, drawing on the experience of many of the strikers who were WWI veterans.

Thus, the strike leaders, anticipating that they would be facing naked state oppression eventually, led the strikers to set up and run infirmaries, soup kitchens, flying squadrons and the like.

Furthermore, a critical aspect of this strike was the formation of the Minneapolis Organization of the Unemployed. The Minneapolis Teamster’s leadership made it a priority to include the unemployed organization as a formal part of their union. Thus the unemployed as well as sympathetic farmers were life-and-death allies of the strikers and played valuable tactical and strategic roles in the strike and thereafter.

The successful conclusion of this strike by Local 574 led to the unionization of over-the-road truckers and other workers throughout the Midwest and nationally.

Commemorations for these three epic strikes and our working class heroes who led them have been and are being held in California, Minnesota and Ohio.

These strikes’ histories included deep sacrifices, including workers being shot dead and beaten. But they were successful strikes that increased the quality of life for workers—both organized and unorganized—throughout the country. These and numerous other upsurges won concessions such as the National Labor Relations Act in 1935.

During all three strikes, union members and their supporters brought forth their strength in the tens of thousands and created or refined many tactics and strategies both offensive and defensive, such as flying squadrons, setting up and implementing worker-run soup kitchens, infirmaries and the like. These strikes were run by militant rank-and-file unionists and supported by their unorganized and unemployed allies. And African Americans, women, foreign-born workers and immigrants played decisive roles in all these strikes.

The strikers clearly proved that establishment politicians, class-collaborating union heads and business unionism were drawbacks to winning strikes or advancing the cause of the working class and oppressed. The

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Real-estate bubble still bursting

25,000 NYC tenants fight for their homes

By G. Dunkel
New York

The real estate crisis is far from over. Speculators who pulled together the biggest real estate deal ever done in the United States, who had hoped to double and even triple rents, now face default in New York's sinking market. With the next decision day in mid-October, the following consequences are possible:

Some 25,000 tenants in 7,000 rent-regulated apartments in one housing development may face legal evictions.

Pension plans for state workers in California and Florida, invested in the real-estate deal, have already taken a hit and could be hurt more.

A key battle between tenants citywide and New York's powerful landlords, already underway in the courts, has the



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Tenant protesters line the sidewalk on New York's First Avenue in May 23, 2007.

potential of spilling into the streets.

The impending default of the Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village apartment complex must be viewed in the context of both the national collapse of the housing bubble and the struggle between landlords and tenants in New York City.

Built in 1947 by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. and held by them until 2006, STPC provided adequate apartments at moderate rents for decades, mainly to white- and blue-collar workers in stable jobs. STPC benefited from tax breaks from the city, in return for keeping the rents within limits. With the explosion in New York City rents and real-estate prices, Met Life finally put STPC on the market.

By promising a 20-percent return on investments, real-estate developer Tishman Speyer managed to put together a deal to buy Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village for \$5.4 billion three years ago. This apartment complex's 56 buildings with 11,277 apartments are located on 80 acres between 14th and 23rd Streets east of First Avenue on Manhattan's east side. Tishman Speyer also put aside a reserve fund of \$900 million.

Tishman Speyer, who some call "vulture capitalists," put up only \$56 million of its own money though it remained the managing partner. It used other people's money.

Rents on these regulated apartments can be legally increased within limits when they turn over and when capital improvements are done on the property, and at regular intervals. Should the rent go above \$2,000 per month and turn over, however, the landlord can then charge whatever the market will bear. Currently de-regulated two-bedroom Stuyvesant Town apartments are advertised starting at \$3,304.

Tishman Speyer had planned to drive thousands of people from their homes and score big by doubling and even tripling the rent on these vacant apartments. Then the real-estate bubble burst, unemployment soared in New York and apartment rents dropped.

RealPoint LLC, a credit rating agency, estimates that STPC is now worth only \$2.13 billion (realpoint.com). More than 60 percent of its apartments are still rent regulated. The economic slowdown and layoffs means that even market-rate tenants are asking for discounts—a few months rent-free, or a significant reduction in their rent, short-term leases for students and so on. According to the Deal Book blog of the Sept. 9 New York Times, "the existing rents cover less than half of the annual debt service on the loans."

Some reports give the end of December as the drop-dead date for Tishman Speyer. Other industry analysts think the real-estate developer can hold out until February before defaulting on the deal.

Calpers, the pension fund for California public employees, a similar pension fund in Florida and a number of other smaller pension funds all have a stake in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. Pensioners are going to suffer because the managers of their retirement funds got caught up in the real estate bubble.

Will tenants fight back?

Most tenants in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village are white—and blue-collar workers and professionals. Many are office workers, teachers, nurses and interns, and Teamsters, iron workers, elevator erectors, painters and so on. When tenants tried to collectively buy STPC in 2006, their main investment came from union pension funds. Tishman Speyer outdid the tenants' bid of \$4 billion.

If the mortgages on any rental property are foreclosed, leases legally can be rescinded and tenants evicted. Many people consider mass eviction an unlikely scenario at STPC. Right now it would mean emptying 7,000 apartments when there are not that many people looking who could afford market prices. While the apartments are unoccupied, they would collect no rent at all.

There would also be the practical and political problems of evicting 25,000 people in a hurry.

But even more important is that the tenants in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village are well organized and tied to a broader tenant coalition throughout New York.

Currently, the tenants are waging a very sharp legal challenge to Tishman Speyer and the previous landlord, Met Life. Both the current and former owner accepted tax benefits known as J-51. A lower court unanimously ruled that by accepting these benefits, the landlord was required to keep the apartments regulated.

If this ruling is upheld by New York state's highest court, Tishman Speyer and Met Life would have to refund hundreds of millions of dollars in rent overpayments and re-regulate thousands of apartments. A decision is expected by mid October.

Many other landlords in New York City also deregulated apartments under dubious conditions and may face the same challenge.

But the tenants don't just rely on the courts and politicians. Right around the time of the sale, when rumors of mass evictions were swirling around the city, a broad coalition of tenant groups called a mass demonstration at Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. Tenant groups from Manhattan communities like the Lower East Side, Chinatown and Harlem, came out in force to defend all tenants under attack by landlords. Tenant groups from Brooklyn and the Bronx, unions, homeless advocates and AIDS groups, who represent people with severe housing needs, also came out in large numbers.

A majority of tenants with regulated rents in the United States live in New York City. Ever since rent regulations were established here nearly 70 years ago, landlords have fought to have them abolished. Tenants have organized to defend and strengthen them. The tenants at Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village have shown they will fight to keep their homes and that the city's tenants are with them. □

Lessons of 1934 strikes

Continued from page 2

workers relied on their own strength in the streets and other battlefronts.

Workers today should take their cue from these historic experiences in fighting present-day battles such as winning the Employee Free Choice Act and a federal jobs program with union wages. We don't win by begging politicians, we win by fighting with everything we've got on every front for what is rightfully ours.

Other illuminating political, social and economic lessons are embedded in the 1934 strikes.

In San Francisco, Minneapolis and Toledo the strikers fought not only for themselves but also solidarized themselves with the struggles for unemployment relief, social security insurance, welfare entitlements and other New Deal concessions such as various jobs programs funded by the federal government.

The American Workers Party, the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party during this period organized the unemployed in the thousands to support the 1934 strikes and numerous others during the Great Depression. In fact the unemployed played critical roles in many strikes to assist their employed sisters and brothers.

The 1934 strikes also helped to usher in a new era of industrial unionism as all three unions won union recognition in the critical basic industries of shipping, transportation and auto. This gave impetus to the formation in 1935 of the Committees for Industrial Organization that formed within the American Federation of Labor.

After the racist and craft-based AFL continued to refuse to seriously organize on an industrial basis in the basic industries of auto, glass, steel, rubber, mining and the like, the Congress of Industrial Organizations formed its separate organization apart from the AFL in 1938 and began to organize basic industry en masse. The United Electrical Workers union was the first member of the CIO in 1938 and its militant legacy continues most recently in their six-day plant occupation in December 2008 in Chicago.

The 1934 strikes took place in the midst of massive upsurges all across the U.S.

Every gain, every concession, every advance won by the working class and oppressed during the 1930s was won in mighty battles in the streets, plants, stores and neighborhoods, often block-by-block. Although many poor and working people were injured, killed and imprisoned by the state, the workers kept fighting.

Actions such as that of the Unemployed Councils moving furniture back into apartments and homes won moratoriums on foreclosures and evictions in over two dozen states. The Sharecroppers union in the South was engaged in pitched battles on many fronts; Midwestern and Plains farmers directly challenged the bankers by physically shutting down farm auctions and blockading roads; the miners in Appalachia were fighting back against the war on them by the bankers and bosses and their goons; the Communist Party waged a fierce international battle to save the lives of the Scottsboro defendants and fought tenaciously against lynching.

It is this agitation and direct action by the masses that forced President Franklin D. Roosevelt and others of the ruling class to move to the degree they did in granting concessions such as the New Deal programs.

In the applied practice of historical materialism, examples from the past are not necessarily blueprints for the future, but they can be instructive about what is possible and point in a general direction. We look towards previous upsurges not only for inspiration but also to learn lessons that can be applied today with the ultimate goal being to win socialism, a political, economic and social system where workers and the oppressed dump the bankers and bosses in the dust bin of history where they belong and where we—the workers and oppressed—run society in our own interests.

The summer of 1934 and the Great Depression generally hold many lessons for us today. From coast to coast. The slogan of the Unemployed Councils, "Organize and fight! Don't Starve!" became the battle cry of large sections of the working class and oppressed in the 1930s.

As the capitalist depression sets in deeper, creating ever widening misery for our class internationally, the spirit, militant actions and lessons of our forebears is needed today more than ever.

**United we eat!
Moratorium NOW!
State of Emergency NOW!
Organize and fight! Don't starve!**

Source authors and books for this article: Michael Honey, "Black Workers Remember;" Robert Rodgers Korstad, "Civil Rights Unionism;" Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, "Defying Dixie;" Robin D.G. Kelley, "Hammer and Hoe;" Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, "Labor's Untold Story;" Fred Goldstein, "Low-Wage Capitalism;" Farrell Dobbs, "Teamster's Rebellion;" David Wellman, "The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront."

Workers’ unity needed to counter

By Fred Goldstein

The recent mass mobilization of racists and right-wingers of all stripes in Washington, D.C., and in cities around the country requires the attention of the working class, white workers especially. In the face of mounting racism and efforts to divide the workers during an economic crisis, the struggle for class unity is more pressing than ever.

While these right-wing demonstrations are numerically small, and may eventually die down, they are politically significant because they represent a de facto bloc between important sections of big business and the racist ultra-right, based upon an immediate common objective: to push back the program of the Obama administration.

Whether this is just a bloc convenient for a particular conjuncture that will dissolve depends upon the fate of President Barack Obama’s program, the course of the economic crisis and the development of the class struggle.

The social and political soil for further inflaming racism is fertile. There are short-term, specific economic interests that the health care industry and Big Oil (ExxonMobil, Chevron, etc.) have in fomenting anti-Obama sentiment, and there are long-term strategic interests that the ruling class as a whole has in stirring up racism.

As far as the right and the ultra-right are concerned, as long as there is an African-American president in the White House and an increase in unemployment, bankruptcies and economic hardship, the basis for racist mobilization will continue to exist.

At the same time, the economic crisis, which is striking relentlessly at the entire multinational working class, provides a profound and powerful basis for a united working-class fightback. Preparations must begin now to mount a strong, anti-racist, pro-working-class counterattack against both the economic crisis and racist division.

Concerning ruling-class politics, it is important to trace the evolution of recent developments.

Throughout August the capitalist media depicted the right-wing and racist intervention at the town hall meetings on health care as an expression of grassroots anger against the prospect of government intervention, excessive government spending, and fear of losing health care, among other things.

It was clear to anyone paying attention that the outrageous attacks on Obama, the racist signs and slogans, including ugly pictures and drawings of all types, had nothing to do with health care or government spending. Actual mentions of health care were a thin veneer covering racist attacks on the first African-American president. They actually popped up in a forest of other slogans about Obama being like Hitler and attacks on socialism, abortion and undocumented workers.

The so-called “tea party” in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 12 has also been depicted as a manifestation of grassroots protest against upcoming legislation on health care reform and environmental protection, including limits on industrial pollution. Tens of thousands attended this event, many with right-wing and racist slogans directed at Obama.

These orchestrated events have been on the increase since the right wing first initiated them in February against the Troubled Asset Relief Program bailout of the banks. When directed against the

banks, they were quite small and not very widespread. Fox News did its best to make these pathetic showings of a handful of ultra-right stragglers look like a grassroots groundswell.

The Republican Party at first made a gesture toward the ultra-right and tried to strike a blow against Obama by voting against TARP. But Wall Street cracked the whip and forced a re-vote, and the TARP \$750 billion bank bailout passed. One by one a majority of the right-wing legislators took the floor to explain why they were changing their votes. None gave the real explanation. Their Wall Street masters gave them unequivocal orders.

Because the demonstrations were against the banks, they were small and scattered. They continued to be small on tax day, April 15, when the issue used to attack Obama was still the bailout of the banks and the stimulus package, both programs that the ruling class as a whole favored.

Health insurance companies and Big Oil move in

But once the health care legislation came on the political agenda, the ultra-right, with their racist poison, took a step forward—especially in the so-called “town hall” meetings. In these meetings the ultra-right were joined by the health care industry.

UnitedHealthcare and WellPoint, two of the largest health insurance companies in the country, sent memos to their employees to take part in the town hall meetings and do lobbying. They also sent talking points along with the memos. They are both under government investigation in California for these activities. (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 3)

UnitedHealthcare and WellPoint were caught because their e-mails were leaked to the media. But other such companies undoubtedly participated in the so-called “grassroots” upsurge.

Around the time of the right-wing town hall offensive, Big Oil, which had been lobbying behind the scenes to kill Obama’s environmental legislation, decided to follow in the footsteps of the health care monopolies.

The cap-and-trade program to put limits on allowable pollution by corporations and require them to purchase pollution permits was regarded as an unwarranted restriction on profits. Furthermore, in the fall, environmental legislation is coming before Congress. After that, the international follow-up to the Kyoto Accords is scheduled for negotiation in Copenhagen.

The polluters want to tie Obama’s hands in Congress so that he cannot even negotiate on significant reductions of carbon gas emissions.

A memo leaked from the American Petroleum Institute, the central organization of Big Oil, and published by Greenpeace revealed the API plan to establish “Energy Citizens” rallies across the country. The memo called upon member oil companies to recruit employees, retirees and contractors to participate in anti-climate control rallies in 22 cities.

The coal industry, railroads, utilities, the National Association of Manufacturers, and other big-business polluters have joined Big Oil in its campaign to create an anti-environmental “grassroots” campaign. The oil companies planned to field over 200,000 so-called volunteers and provide buses, rally financing and other support.

Big firms work with ultra-right

Who did the health care industry and the polluters work with? The two principal organizations operating both campaigns are called Freedomworks and Americans for Prosperity.

Freedomworks is headed by right-wing politician/ideologue/organizer Dick Armey, the former House majority leader from Texas. Other right-wing racists helped form its leadership, including billionaire Steve Forbes, the late Jack Kemp, and C. Boyden Grey. Freedomworks collaborates with Newt Gingrich, among others.

Because of all the recent publicity, Armey recently resigned from his position with DLA Piper, a high-powered global lobbying firm. DLA Piper’s clients include the DuPont Corp., BP America, Edison Electric and Alliant Energy, among other energy-related polluters.

The firm also represents military contractor Raytheon, pharmaceuticals Sanofi-Aventis and Medicines Co., Qualcomm, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and various other giant companies.

Armey and Freedomworks constitute a convenient nexus between big business and the ultra-right. Up until the Obama administration took office, Freedomworks was mainly a networking organization that carried out occasional, limited campaigns. These included a campaign to privatize Social Security in 2006, a campaign against Obama’s program of aid to people facing foreclosure, and several right-wing electoral campaigns.

Another nexus is Americans for Prosperity. According to Kert Davies,

research director for Greenpeace, this group “is doing both attacks on cap-and-trade and attacks on health care, funded by Koch Industries ... a big oil company. So this is a coordinated attack. And as you know, it’s ... bigger than these issues. It is an attack on Obama’s power base.” (Democracy Now, Aug. 21)

Since the health care industry, Big Oil and other big-business industries began artificially manufacturing “grassroots” political opposition to the Obama program, Freedomworks and Americans for Prosperity have been catapulted into the national spotlight. They have gone from behind-the-scenes networking and sporadic public activities to mobilizing demonstrations on a national scale.

Such organizations can easily be dissolved or supplanted by others, and are not a threat in and of themselves. But they are a transmission belt of funds and resources, both from the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, that are used to create an arena for organizing by right-wing groups.

Right-wing strength exaggerated

The right wing appears much stronger than its actual representation in the population. Millions of white workers voted for Obama. It is doubtful at this point that they are being swept into a racist backlash.

The strength of the right is exaggerated both because the ruling class, including their media, want it that way and because the working class has not yet moved onto the arena of struggle to challenge the economic crisis.

Obama’s candidacy was predicated on getting the troops out of Iraq and achieving a domestic program of reforming the health care system, reversing the destruction of the environment, and reviving the educational system, among other things. The reforms proposed were mild at best.

But big business has been on the gravy train since the end of the Jimmy Carter administration in the late 1970s, when deregulation began in many areas of capitalism. Then, under Reagan, Clinton and the Bushes, the corporations have had a veritable free hand to expand their profits and exploitation—facilitated by the destruction of anti-trust laws, NAFTA and the repeal of depression-era banking restrictions.

The bosses want nothing to interfere with this system. They are determined to push back any reforms that diminish their profits—including even the mildest health care reform or restrictions on pol-

“With the capitalist system demonstrably unfair, irrational, and prone to intermittent crises, it is useful, indeed refreshing, to see a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on working people. Fred Goldstein’s ‘Low-Wage Capitalism’ does exactly that.”

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Abayomi Azikiwe

Editor, Pan-African News Wire, Detroit

“From the point of view of Filipino workers in the U.S. the largest exploited and abused Filipino workforce outside the Philippines . . . we are pleased with the exposé of imperialist globalization as the main culprit of global forced migration.”

Berna Ellorin

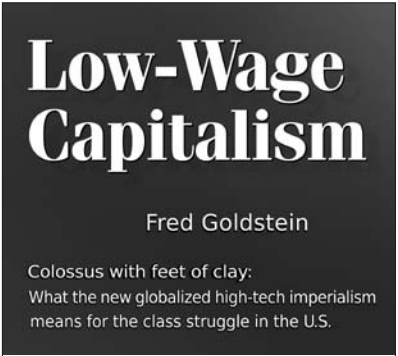
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Low-Wage Capitalism

What the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.

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ultra-right mobilizations

lution. Hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate wealth are ultimately at stake. There is nothing that the oil and coal companies, the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries, and all the rest of the profiteers won't do to get their way.

That is their immediate cause for fanning the flames of racism and getting behind right-wing propaganda about "big government" and "socialism." The right-wing ideologues and the corporations have a common interest in promoting such poison.

But all this seems far weightier than it actually is regarding the general population. And that is because the working class has not yet entered the arena of struggle.

The situation is still at the point where it takes former President Carter to acknowledge the hostility to Obama is racism. As New York Times columnist Bob Herbert wrote: "Did we really need Jimmy Carter to tell us that racism is one of the driving forces behind the relentless and often scurrilous attacks on President Obama? We didn't know that? As John McEnroe might say, 'You can't be serious.'" (Sept. 19)

While it was progressive for Carter to call out the racism behind the anti-Obama campaign of the Republicans and the ultra-right, the African-American population and the working class should not have to rely on a representative of U.S. imperialism to fight their battles.

After all, as Herbert pointed out, Carter once defended neighborhood "ethnic purity" during his presidential campaign. In addition, Carter turned his back on millions of poor women, disproportionately Black and Latina, when he refused to override legislation banning the use of federal funds for abortion. At the time Carter was asked at a press conference if this was fair. His infamous and callous response was: "Life is not fair." (National Black Network, July 18, 1977)

Obama and Carter

The media have pitted Carter against Obama on the question of race. Obama has denied that race has motivated the hostility to him and attributed it to fear of government. It is easy for Carter to come off smelling like a rose because now that he has no authority, he can say what he likes. When he was president and had the authority to act on behalf of the poor and the oppressed, he declined to do so.

Obama, on the other hand, is caught in a vise-like dilemma. As president, he is supposed to represent the overall interests of the ruling class. Were he to open up a struggle against racism, he would be abandoning his role as representative of the collective interests of the ruling class and would become an advocate for the oppressed.

Precisely because he is African American and is president, even the slightest tilt in an openly anti-racist direction could be a great stimulus to the anti-racist struggle and lead to destabilizing the racist status quo. The ruling class, however, would regard such a development as a gross violation of his office. Jimmy Carter, on the other hand, is not endangering the status quo.

This became evident during the Professor Henry Louis Gates affair when Obama said the Cambridge cops "acted stupidly" and was then forced to take it back. The fact that the establishment allowed a local cop and a local police department to defy the president of the U.S. and to refuse to apologize for an egregious case of racial profiling shows how

sensitive the ruling class is to Obama's tilting even slightly toward criticizing racism or the racist police.

In the Gates case, Obama could not even defend one of the most prestigious members of academia against the police thug who illegally arrested him. Now, in the case of the so-called anti-health care reform demonstrations, Obama cannot even defend himself against racism. He is in the utterly contradictory position of being the first African American to head the capitalist state—which is, among other things, a racist state, the same racist state that Carter loyally served when he was president.

In any case, the arguments put forward by both Obama and Carter obscure the class truth of the present situation. It is the racist ruling class that is ultimately behind the town halls, the "tea parties," and the arch-racists like Rep. Joe Wilson.

It is the working class that must lead the real struggle on the ground to beat back the racist attack. The unions and the community organizations should take over the town hall meetings and the streets with demands for jobs, health care, housing and an end to racism.

Out of the population of 300 million people in the United States, 100 million

are now people of color. That proportion is rising. The working class is becoming more and more multinational, and the long-term strategy of the ruling class is to keep the workers from uniting.

Racism has been a prop for U.S. capitalism since the days of slavery. It has been used economically to extract super-profits from the African-American, Latino/a, Indigenous and Asian populations. And it has been used to politically poison white workers and keep them from uniting against the class enemy.

But the needs of the class struggle can turn this around. It should be remembered that the Ku Klux Klan reached its height during the 1920s. In 1924 tens of thousands of KKK members held a march in Washington, D.C. The Klan spread its influence far beyond the South. It included governors, mayors, state legislators and judges.

But then came the upsurge of the working class in the 1930s. The Klan showed its anti-union colors as workers all over gravitated toward the Congress of Industrial Organizations and industrial unionism. Union organizers promoted Black-white unity, a necessity in the struggle to organize. The Klan, always an instrument of capital and the big plantation owners

in the South, turned its fire against the unions.

The KKK opposed the Unemployed Councils; it opposed the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, the sit-down strike movement, and the class struggle in general. It carried out floggings and murders of labor organizers. But in the long run, it lost out to the industrial union movement. While it retained strength in the South, it was pushed back for decades by the rise of the class struggle.

The road to beating back the racists today is the same as the road to beating back the effects of the capitalist crisis—the united class struggle and mass mobilization of a labor-community alliance.

White workers must recognize that racism is the tool of the class enemy. As Karl Marx wrote 150 years ago in the first volume of "Capital": "In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black it is branded."

An injury to one is an injury to all.

Fred Goldstein is the author of the recently published book "Low-Wage Capitalism."

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Rev. Tom Smith speaks at Freedom Corner.

PITTSBURGH G-20 MARCH FOR JOBS



People's Organization for Progress leader, Aminifu Williams.



March passes jazz mural in the Hill district.

Continued from page 1

both nationally and locally, including the Associated Press, Reuters, the Wall Street Journal, the French Press Agency and others. Organizers of the march attributed the media interest to the fact that the march addressed the crisis of joblessness and its devastating impact on the Black community.

People came from cities throughout the country to join a significant number of Pittsburgh area residents for the march. The cities represented included Los Angeles, San Francisco, Detroit, Cleveland, Akron, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Miami, New York, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Providence, the North Carolina Triangle area and Boston. Many have been laid off or lost their homes to foreclosures. Despite the crisis, people were spirited, drawing strength from being together and from building a movement.

"In honor of Martin Luther King we are continuing what he started in uniting people together in a poor people's campaign," the Rev. Tom Smith, pastor of Monumental Baptist Church and one of the organizers of the march, told the rally. "The G-20 is structuring deals to protect the corporations and not the workers. It's time for the workers to come together and make a difference."

People gathered in the morning at Monumental Baptist Church located in the historic African-American Hill district of Pittsburgh. A tent city dedicated to the unemployed had been set up next to the church the day before. Many of the protesters will stay at the tent city throughout the week with more people expected to join as the G-20 summit opens.

An opening rally was held before the march stepped off at about 2:30. People marched carrying hundreds of placards with the image of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and chanting, "We got the right! We got the right to a job!" The march ended at Freedom Corner, where in 1963 people got on buses to go to the historic civil rights march in Washington, D.C.

Larry Holmes, an organizer of the Bail Out the People Movement, said the government claims a jobless recovery is on the horizon. He emphasized that this is unacceptable. "A jobless recovery is like a dead patient after a successful operation," he said.

Monica Moorehead of the organization Millions for Mumia recognized the more than two million people in prison who couldn't be at the demonstration. She introduced a taped message from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

At the closing rally, Fred Redmond, United Steelworkers vice president, noted the need for universal health care and affordable education as well as jobs for all. "Enough of our kids are going to school where the rats outnumber the comput-



Larry Holmes.

ers," he said. "We have to assure that every child receives an education to equip them for the 21st century."

Other speakers at the two rallies included Oscar Hernandez, a participant in the 11-month Stella D'Oro bakery strike in New York City; Clarence Thomas, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 and Million Worker March Movement; Brenda Stokely and Jennifer Jones, NYC Coalition in Solidarity with Katrina/Rita Survivors; Rob Robinson, Picture the Homeless; Rosemary Williams, Poor Peoples Economic Human Rights Campaign; Mick Kelly, Coalition for a Peoples Bailout; Nellie Bailey, Harlem Tenants Council; John Parker, Bail Out the People Movement organizer in Los Angeles; Sandra Hines, Michigan Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs; Rokhee Devastali, Feminist Students United, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; civil rights attorney Lynne Stewart; Larry Hales, FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together); Larry Adams, People's Organization for Progress; Pam Africa, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; Victor Toro, an immigrant facing deportation and member of the May 1st Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights; Berna Ellorin, BAYAN-USA; Father Luis Barrios, Pastors for Peace; Kali Akuno, U.S. Human Rights Network; and Pennsylvania state Sen. Jim Ferlo.

Why people came to Pittsburgh

The march was a powerful draw for people, many of whom traveled long distances to be part of the event. Strikers from TRW Automotive, a seatbelt-making plant in Mexico, had been in Detroit speaking out about their struggle when they heard about the protest in Pittsburgh and joined the bus from Detroit. One member of the TRW group, Israel Mouroig of the Coalition



Oscar Hernandez, Stella D'Oro strike activist.

for Justice in the Maquiladoras, said it was necessary to forge alliances at the international level. “Corporations that generate billions of dollars a year produced the crisis in our country,” he said. “There is a lack of jobs because they see the working class as robots, as numbers. We have to appropriate the means of production and be the actors of our own history.”

Several people drove from Los Angeles, including Guy Anthony, who lost his job as an organizer with the Service Employees union in June. Now living in his car, he has traveled around the country writing a blog about his experiences (thedistantdrummer.com). “You can’t talk about joblessness without talking about homelessness,” Anthony said. He met people in Seattle who had set up “a fabulous tent city” on church property. He also stayed with people who set up a homeless community at a roadside stop off of Route 280 south of San Francisco. “You couldn’t want better neighbors,” he said. “Nobody went hungry. It was a beautiful socialist community.” The county recently shut the group down.

A large contingent from the Boston School Bus Drivers union, USW Local 8751, including Gary Murchison, former three-term president of the local, and Frantz Mendes, current president, showed up three days before the march to help



Steelworkers' official Fred Redmond.

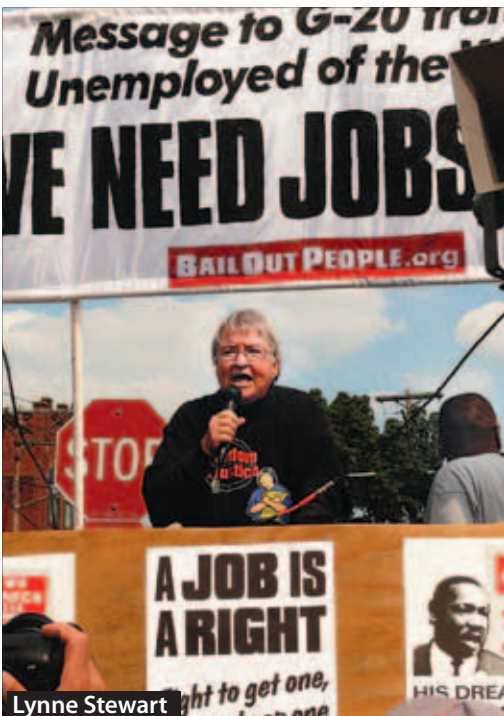


Katrina survivors Jackie Landry & Jennifer Jones.

organize and build the tent city.

Detroit activists, who organized a hugely successful tent city in June, brought a busload of people to Pittsburgh. “We had to be here,” said Sandra Hines of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. “We have to mobilize, organize before they take every right we have away from us.” Latonya Lloyd, who was part of the Detroit delegation, recently battled the shut-off of utilities at the Highland Towers apartment building.

Mary Kay Harris came with about 40 other people on a bus from Rhode Island. A member of DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), Harris said that as soon as they heard about the March for Jobs they decided they had to be there. Rhode Island, which has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country,



Lynne Stewart



Two women from Pittsburgh join march after church services.

has a tent city of the homeless. “We feel that solidarity is the most important thing,” she said.

Activists in Cleveland also brought a busload of people, including a large contingent from the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign. And a group of 18 youth came from North Carolina, including Tracy Gill, a member of FIST who said this was the first big protest she had ever been to.

Members of the Minnesota People’s Bailout Coalition also came to the march. Angel Buechner said the organization had fought for legislation last year that would

have provided immediate jobs or income and a moratorium on foreclosures and on the state’s five-year limit on receiving welfare. But Gov. Tim Pawlenty defeated the measure. Despite the setback, Buechner is ready to continue the battle.

At the ending rally at Freedom Corner, Holmes announced—to the approval of the crowd—that the next step is to build a national march for jobs in Washington next April to continue Dr. King’s dream. □

*Workers World photos by
LeiLani Dowell, Brenda Sandburg,
Dante Strobino and G. Dunkel*



John Parker organized a van from Los Angeles.

A tale of two cities in Pittsburgh

By Larry Hales
Pittsburgh

Sept. 16—As the G-20 Summit prepares to descend upon Pittsburgh, the city has been thrust into the spotlight, and is being highlighted for its “commitment to employing new and green technology to further economic recovery and development.” It has been and is being denoted as the city that got it right, where pollution has been eroded, the rivers cleaned, and the jobs in industry have thoroughly been replaced.

But this is farce. The changes are superficial and the most oppressed workers have not recovered from the loss of steel jobs; this fact is most clearly seen in neighborhoods like the Hill District.

While the dignitaries that represent the G-20 countries are shown a “revitalized” downtown Pittsburgh, they will not see the conditions of neighborhoods that surround downtown.

As far as gatherings go, the starkest contrast in Pittsburgh during the G-20 Summit week will be between the glamour and glitz of the summit, the primped and polished downtown hotels where world leaders and finance ministers will stay, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Hill—about a mile away from the G-20 Summit convention—where those protesting unemployment will be sleeping in a tent city.

Following a march for jobs on Sept. 20, protesters will live on the Hill throughout the week until the end of the G-20 Summit. The Hill is one of the oldest, poorest, most renowned and besieged African-American neighborhoods in the country.

Once known for its nightlife and jazz clubs, today the streets of the Hill—where

famed playwright August Wilson was born—have more than a few boarded houses and failed restaurants, small businesses and neighborhood stores. Parts of the Hill look more like the poorest neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince or the Gaza Strip than a U.S. city.

Most young people of working age who live on the Hill are not only unemployed, most have never had a job, and there are fewer and fewer low wage jobs available to them. From as far back as the mid-1950s, real estate interests have been working hard to push the native poor and working-class inhabitants out of the Hill to make way for the more well-to-do. While that process is not over, the rich, right now, are winning the war for control of the Hill.

I was not born in Pittsburgh, but in another part of western Pennsylvania—Erie, Pa.—where the conditions are different but similar. I was born in 1976 and spent my first 15 years there. My parents worked in factories, my mother making ceramics and my father still for GE Transportations, where he is anticipating retiring after 40 long years making locomotives and locomotive parts.

Both of my parents migrated to Erie from southern Mississippi. They were in their late teens, and neither had a high school education. During the period when my parents migrated from the South, there were many thousands more Black people who did the same, fleeing the repressive and racist conditions in the South in hopes of better paying jobs and better social relations.

By the time I became cognitively aware, conditions in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio had already begun to change. The well-paying jobs in the factories were

beginning to dry up, and working people in what has now become known as the Rust Belt were being cast off from their jobs in the tens of thousands as deindustrialization set in, sweeping the land like a foreboding cloud of doom.

I can recall the looks on the faces of children I attended school with. Their parents would lose their jobs, and though as children we could not completely comprehend the consequences of our parents’ unemployment, the despair on their faces was enough. It’s like a child who falls but looks around for the reaction of the adults before deciding whether to laugh or cry.

I was not aware then—few of the children of factories workers really were—of what was happening in Pittsburgh, the shuttering of steel plants because of technology or outsourcing. Pittsburgh is much larger than Erie, and has a richer history of struggle, but is also a city that had long been under the sway of the Mellons, Carnegies and other super-rich who made their fortunes off of the exploitation of working people, even hiring armed thugs like the Pinkertons to shoot down striking workers.

Pittsburgh, like Erie and most U.S. Midwest cities where 20 percent of the population is Black, is largely segregated. But at least Black people had the Hill. Back in the day, the Hill was the place that Black steelworkers could make a better life for their families than their parents could make for them. The hope of those on the Hill who are trying to hold on to all they have is that the jobs march and tent city will help them even the odds a little against the gentry.

People from as far away as North Carolina, New York, Miami, Detroit,

Minneapolis and even California will be meeting on the Hill in front of Monumental Baptist Church at Wylie and Soho Streets at 2 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 20, for the march for jobs. The marchers, who are expected to be in the thousands, will march to Freedom Corner at Crawford and Centre Streets where there is a monument to civil rights activists and leaders.

After Black residents were pushed out of what was once called the lower Hill to make way for the development of a stadium, Freedom Corner is where the Black community rose up and proclaimed that the developers would not be able to push beyond that point. Freedom Corner is where thousands gathered in the summer of 1963 to board buses to travel to the historic civil rights march in Washington, D.C. It is also where angry and shocked people gathered on that terrible day in April 1968 when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

There could not be a more appropriate location in Pittsburgh for the jobs march to rally because it was Dr. King’s vision of a second civil rights movement, a movement for the right of all to decent paying jobs, that the civil rights leader dedicated the final weeks of his life to. The goal of the jobs march is to revive that vision. After the rally, many will return to Monumental Baptist Church, the site of the Bail Out the Unemployed Tent City, to get ready for their first night underneath the sky.

Hales is a native of Erie, Pa., a leader of FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), and a regular contributor to Workers World. Posted just before the G-20 demonstrations, Hales’ commentary can be found on Real Talk Xpress, the International Action Center, fistyouth.wordpress.com and other sites and blogs.

A real death panel

Corporate board pulls plug on dialysis for poor patients

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

More than 100 patients, their family members, doctors, other health workers and community activists packed into the board room at Grady Hospital on Sept. 14 to press for the continued operation of the outpatient dialysis clinic, a function of the once-public hospital for 62 years.

Ignoring the appeals of the crowd, many of whom held signs reading “How Many Will Die?” and “Keep the Clinic Open,” the corporate-dominated privatized board voted unanimously to close the life-sustaining treatment facility on Sept. 20.

Despite boasting of raising more than \$280 million for the financially stressed hospital, Board Chairman Pete Correll, former head of Georgia-Pacific, justified the decision by stating that the dialysis clinic was “a big money loser.”

About 100 patients suffering from renal failure and kidney disease currently receive dialysis at Grady. Some of them must go three times a week to rid their bodies of the deadly toxins that build up. Many of them are long-time immigrant residents who have lived in the Atlanta area for decades but under Georgia law are ineligible for Medicaid coverage.

Others who are U.S. citizens or have a green card have not yet been approved for Medicaid. Georgia has one of the highest rates of application rejection in the country, requiring sick people to apply multiple times or wait extraordinarily long



PHOTO: JONATHAN SPRINGSTON, ATLANTA PROGRESSIVE NEWS

Protesters demand treatment for poor people at Grady Hospital’s clinic.

times for acceptance into the program.

In August, social workers began to tell these critically ill people that the clinic was closing. People were given a seven-page list of for-profit dialysis centers to call to see if the centers would accept them as patients.

Their other options were to return to their home country, move to another state where Medicaid is available to undocumented immigrants, or go to an emergency room when the poison build-up

brings them dangerously close to death. Federal law mandates emergency dialysis treatment if death is likely.

As a gesture of “care and compassion” for these patients, Grady officials offered to pay for plane tickets to Mexico, Thailand, Honduras and Ethiopia as well as transportation to the 11 states identified as providing immigrant care. Inexplicably, when contacted by reporters from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, health officials in at least three of those states—North

Carolina, Virginia and New Jersey—said they also do not pay for outpatient dialysis treatment for undocumented sick people. Florida, another state on the list, requires a six-month residency, an impossible wait for a dialysis patient.

The patients who testified at news conferences, rallies and at the board meeting repeatedly said they had nowhere to go. Many are unable to work. All have family and children in the Atlanta area who care for them, take them to their doctor appointments and dialysis treatments.

One woman said through her tears: “I have no one in Mexico. Who will look after me?” Her three young granddaughters carried a carefully printed sign that read, “Don’t send our grandmother away.”

Opponents of the closure won a temporary restraining order on Sept. 16 that mandated the hospital continue serving dialysis patients and prohibited it from pressuring patients to leave the state. On Sept. 23, there will be a hearing to determine if the injunction will stay in effect.

In his initial ruling, Judge Ural Glanville stated that before he would allow the clinic to close, Grady would have to provide all patients with a “plan that does not jeopardize their lives or medical needs.”

The Grady Coalition, which has been an activist voice for quality patient care and for workers’ rights at the hospital for 10 years, is being joined in the struggle to save the dialysis clinic by Grady Advocates for Responsible Care, a group of doctors, clinicians and patients. □

SOMALIA

U.S.-backed war sharpens humanitarian crisis

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Since 2007 U.S. foreign policy has deeply injured Somalia. The U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government has utilized the African Union Mission to Somalia troops stationed in the capital, Mogadishu, to hold onto power amid the continuing attempts by two popular organizations, al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, to seize power in this nation in the Horn of Africa.

Recent reports issued by the aid organization Oxfam and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees indicate that as a result of the fighting and the drought that has struck Somalia and the entire East Africa region, growing numbers of people, mainly women and children, are in direct need of shelter, food, water and medicines.

With specific reference to Somalia, it is estimated that at least 1.5 million people have been displaced inside the country. Other hundreds of thousands have fled to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia.

The AMISOM forces, from Uganda and Burundi, are approximately 5,000 strong and control only areas in Mogadishu. Other African states have refused to dispatch their soldiers to defend the U.S.-backed TFG. In a recent budget proposal, the Obama administration pledged \$67 million to support the TFG and AMISOM troops in Somalia.

Drought impacts the Somali economy

Lack of rain and crop failure have caused the loss of a large number of the population's livestock. Livestock production is the mainstay of the economic life of many people within the central and southern regions of the country.

The interior minister of the TFG, Sheikh Abdulkadir Ali Omar, recently explained to the U.N. Inter-regional Information Network on Sept. 3 that, "I have been in touch with people throughout the regions and the reports we are getting are that the drought is widespread and the situation of the people is very grave, with water shortages the biggest problem for both animals and people.

"Livestock are dying in their thousands, with families losing everything. On the outskirts of most small towns from Gedo [southwest] to Galkayo [northeast], you will now find nomadic families in flimsy shelters looking for help," the interior minister stated. (IRIN, Sept. 7)

Omar told IRIN that the situation was beyond the TFG's ability to resolve. He said that the government was appealing to the international community for assistance. "This is bigger than anything we have seen in a long time. I hope our partners will do their utmost to mitigate the suffering of the people."

In the self-declared state of Galmudug in central Somalia, President Ahmed Ali Hilowle told IRIN by telephone from Gakkayo: "Even camels are dying. It is a disaster."

Hilowle went on to say: "We had two years of dismal rains and the people are on the verge of dying." This area of Somalia must have barkads (water catchments) for water "and almost all are dry. We are now trucking water sometimes over 100 kilometers." He said that one water tanker, with 200 drums, costs \$200 and that few people can afford this, or any amount.

Control of resources at root of conflict

The U.S. and other Western countries intervene in and around Somalia both to control the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean as well as to claim concessions for oil exploration and exploitation. A recent controversy has been generated over a 15-page "Memorandum of Understanding," supposedly written by the U.N. secretary general's special representative to Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, which would give drilling rights for oil off the continental shelf of Somalia, extending the rights for 200 miles, to the Kenyan government, another U.S. client.

Gerald Lemelle, executive director of Africa Action in Washington, D.C., spoke of the Western countries' aims following the demise of direct colonialism. "Nations such as Norway had to figure out a way to maintain control over African resources, so they use Security Council resolutions, and African proxies such as Kenya (Norway reportedly paid \$200 million to

Kenya for the agreement)," he said. "At the heart of Western intervention in Somalia, which has been a geopolitical football, is the battle for its oil," Mr. Lemelle said. (Final Call, Sept. 8)

Human rights activists Sadia Aden and professor Abdi Ismail Samitar, a Somali advocate at the University of Minnesota, agree. Aden told the Final Call that the navies that patrol the waters off Somalia ostensibly to fight piracy are only there to exploit the country's oil and natural gas reserves.

"Somalis know that these navies did not come to hunt and prosecute pirates but to divide the Somali seas, and to protect their interests as they hope to divide up our resources—not just in the ocean, but also on land," Aden added.

A Los Angeles Times article published in January 1993, during the U.S. military occupation of Somalia, raised similar issues. "That land, in the opinion of geologists and industry sources, could yield significant amounts of oil and natural gas if the U.S.-led military mission can restore peace to the impoverished East African nation.

"According to documents obtained by The Times, nearly two-thirds of Somalia was allocated to the American oil giants Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips in the final years before Somalia's pro-U.S. president, Mohamed Siad Barre, was

overthrown and the nation plunged into chaos in January 1991. Industry sources said the companies holding the rights to the most promising concessions are hoping that the [George H. W.] Bush administration's decision to send U.S. troops to safeguard aid shipments to Somalia will also help protect their multimillion-dollar investments there." (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 18, 1993)

What was true in 1993 is truer in 2009. U.S. imperialism and its allies are scrambling for resources to maintain their dominant economic and political status in the world. But this interest in Somalia's resources has not led to any effective assistance program to confront the grave humanitarian crisis caused by the fighting and the drought.

Somalis must unite and fight for the genuine independence and sovereignty of their country. People inside the U.S. must not be tricked into believing that the Pentagon and State Department's involvement in Somalia is designed to fight terrorism and bring stability to the country and region.

Anti-imperialists and anti-war forces must support the Somali people in their struggle for genuine liberation and economic development.

For more Pan-African news and analysis, go to panafricannews.blogspot.com.

San Diego students hear report on Gaza



At a Sept. 16 well-attended meeting at San Diego State University co-facilitated by Lorain Rihan and Shelley Burke of the SDSU Students for Justice in Palestine, Viva Palestina participant and International Action Center West Coast Coordinator John Parker was the featured speaker. He described the experiences of the international delegation of 200 activists who, two months ago, successfully challenged the U.S.-supported, Israeli/Egyptian blockade

of Gaza and delivered much-needed humanitarian aid to the beleaguered but defiant Palestinian residents. Gloria Verdieu of the San Diego IAC introduced dramatic video footage shot by Parker during the trip. Shown with Parker (center) are Powell Digangi (left) and Kevin Iranihn (right), both of whom were also members of the Viva Palestina delegation and also spoke at the meeting.

—Report and photo by Bob McCubbin

Teachers strike over class size

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

On Sept. 14, 1,800 teachers from the working-class Kent School District in Washington state overwhelmingly ratified a new contract, ending their strong 18-day strike.

Although details of the new agreement aren't out yet, the Kent Education Association—the teachers' union—made it clear during their struggle that the teachers would not go back to work without a cap on classroom sizes. That was the key issue.

With a reserve fund of \$21 million, the Kent School District, the fourth largest in the state with 26,000 students, could have met the teachers' demands at any time.

On Sept. 1, the school district filed for an injunction against the teachers' strike, which began on Aug. 27. Two days later, King County Superior Court Judge Andrea Darvas asserted that the teachers'

strike was illegal and ordered the teachers to return to their classrooms.

The teachers adamantly stood up to the school district and the courts. On Labor Day weekend, they voted overwhelmingly to defy the injunction. They kept the strike going and asserted their legal right to do so, maintaining that there is no state law barring teachers' strikes. And they had the strong support of parents and students.

The KEA and striking teachers remained resolute, even after Judge Darvas threatened on Sept. 10 to impose huge fines on both the union and individual teachers retroactive to Sept. 8 if they did not return to work by Sept. 15.

On Sept. 14, the KEA held a rally of 2,000 people, which included members of teachers' unions from all over the region and community representatives.

Only 30 minutes after the rally started, KEA President Lisa Brackin Johnson announced a new tentative agreement had been reached!

A new book by
Leslie Feinberg

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This new book is a compilation of 25 articles from the Lavender & Red series in Workers World newspaper, shows how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love inherited from the colonial and imperial eras. The book shows the Cuban Revolution's trajectory of progress in hard facts. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

www.leftbooks.com



Welcome Pres. Chavez Solidarity with Pres. Zelaya

Continued from page 1

without an iota of popular support—their only base being the 13-family Honduran oligarchy, the Pentagon, the CIA and a section of the U.S. State Department.

The struggle between oppressor and oppressed goes on worldwide. In Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as other countries of Central and West Asia, the imperialists are trying to turn back the clock and, in the name of their fictitious “war on terror,” recapture territories once under naked colonial rule. This offensive has been stalemated by homegrown resistance movements that deserve worldwide solidarity on the basis of respect for self-determination.

In Latin America, on the other hand, the struggle against neoliberal domination of the region’s economies, especially by U.S. imperialism, has re-raised the question of a socialist solution. Because of this, the developments in Latin America have attracted the attention and support of those who advocate and fight for a socialist solution to the worldwide capitalist crisis.

Both because of its history and its strategic relationship to the region, the attempts at revolutionary transformation in Venezuela have aroused particular enthusiasm. The Bolivarian movement it has inspired holds the promise of greater independence from “The North” on many levels, political as well as economic.

For that reason, President Chávez has been the constant target of slanders from imperialist politicians and the corporate media. All the more should he receive solidarity from workers and oppressed peoples in the U.S.

Chávez and Zelaya

It was Zelaya’s decision to join the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), a union of nine Latin American and Caribbean countries, that particularly outraged the Honduran oligarchy and their U.S. government and military cohorts. Their response was to remove the legitimate president from his house at gunpoint and fly him to Costa Rica—with a stop at a U.S.-run military base along the way.

Since that June 28 coup, the Honduran community, labor and Indigenous mass movements have welded together a united resistance front. This popular struggle has turned the Honduran regime led by coup leader Roberto Micheletti into a state that can claim support from only a narrow segment of the Honduran population, the army and their patrons in the U.S. mili-

tary-political establishment.

Only U.S. support holds up the coup regime in Honduras. Besides being Honduras’ major trading partner, Washington used that country as its military outpost against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the Salvadoran revolutionaries in the 1980s. The largest Pentagon military base in Central America, Palmerola, was in Honduras. The Honduran military chiefs—all trained at the Pentagon’s “School of the Americas”—depend on Washington for material aid, weapons, and assistance in training, surveillance and military actions.

While the State Department and White House have spoken mildly against the coup, they have taken no decisive steps to dissociate from its crimes—despite the fact that the Organization of American States, UNASUR, many human rights organizations, almost all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and even some of the U.S.’s NATO allies have gone on record opposing it. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, for example, has spent more words criticizing President Zelaya for defying the coup leaders than she has criticizing the coup itself.

Zelaya’s return has elevated the anti-coup struggle to a new level. The army has moved brutally against the thousands welcoming his return. Will a pro-U.S. coup regime be allowed to stand—as in similar coups throughout the 20th century—or will the popular movement reverse it?

A lot depends on the amount of solidarity the anti-coup resistance can arouse within the U.S., and whether this movement can stop imperialism’s backing for the coup. That’s why the movement to support President Zelaya’s return should be growing, not only in Honduras but here.

While this editorial focuses especially on Latin America, Workers World would also like to welcome all those other world leaders arriving in the U.S. who have been demonized by imperialist politicians and in the corporate media. Among them are President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, a historic leader of that country’s movement for independence from Britain, and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who continues to defy imperialist threats to re-subjugate his country. □

JUAN ALMEIDA ☆ 1927-2009

Cuba honors a ‘Commander of the Revolution’

By Deirdre Griswold

Juan Almeida Bosque, who recently died in Cuba at the age of 82, was one of the original band of revolutionary heroes who stormed the heavens and brought down the brutal dictatorship of U.S. lackey Fulgencio Batista on Jan. 1, 1959. That alone guarantees that he will always be remembered with enormous affection and reverence, not only in Latin America but also around the world.

Almeida was born into poverty in Havana. From the age of 11, he worked as a bricklayer to help support his family. He joined forces with Fidel Castro soon after Batista took power through a coup d’état in 1952. At that time, Fidel was a law student at the University of Havana, where he formed a group opposing the dictatorship.

Almeida participated in the 1953 attack on the Moncada army barracks that alerted the world to the existence of a revolutionary organization in Cuba. While the attack failed and those who survived spent two years in jail, it fired the imagination of countless young people. Fidel’s immortal speech to the court, “History Will Absolve Me,” won recruits for a second try at overthrowing the dictatorship in 1956.

This time they went from Mexico to Cuba by boat, the Granma, and set up a base in the Sierra Maestra mountains. The majority were killed by Batista’s army shortly after landing, but 16 survived, among them Juan Almeida.

Almeida was central to many of the daring battles that soon turned the tide in Cuba. In less than three years, the small band of guerrillas swelled with recruits, including young peasants and workers oppressed by Batista’s tyranny and exploited by the U.S. corporations that sponsored him.

Almeida helped lead and train these youth into a formidable guerrilla army. He was widely quoted for declaring: “Nobody here is going to surrender!” In 1958, he became commander of the Santiago Column, which liberated the eastern end of the island. At the time of his death, he was one of only three surviving Cubans to bear the title “Commander of the Revolution”—an honorific reserved for leaders of the guerrilla struggle.

Almeida was the only Afro Cuban to become a commander in the 1950s guer-



Cuban president Raul Castro with Almeida

rilla struggle. With his military prowess and his resolute commitment to the revolution, he joins the pantheon of great Black liberators who changed Cuban history—like Antonio Maceo, a hero of both the struggle against slavery and Cuba’s war for independence. Nicknamed “the Bronze Titan,” Maceo died in battle fighting Spanish colonial domination in 1896.

After the triumph of the revolution in 1959, Almeida continued to play a central role in the reorganization of Cuban society, which began with a literacy campaign and land reform and then, in the words of Che Guevara, “grew over” into a socialist revolution that ended forever the grip of U.S. corporations and the Cuban oligarchy over the economy. It was the expropriation of the profiteers that made it possible to develop a system of free medical care and education that has made Cubans today among the healthiest and best-educated people in the hemisphere.

In 1965, when the Communist Party of Cuba was officially launched—after a transition in which the old Communist Party was merged with Fidel’s 26th of July Movement—Juan Almeida became a member of its Central Committee and Political Bureau. He continued in these key Party positions for the rest of his life.

In addition, he took on the role of a vice-president of the State Council and chief of staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, where he helped steer the new Cuba through momentous struggles resisting U.S. imperialist aggression, from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to the CIA bombing of a Cuban passenger airliner in 1976.

Somehow, despite all these responsibilities, this person of many talents also contributed to Cuba’s rich culture, writing 300 songs and several books about the country’s musical traditions.

Almeida belonged to a generation of larger-than-life heroes, women and men, many of whom were cut down in the struggle and never saw the fruits of their sacrifice. However, a younger generation of revolutionaries has taken up their cause, including the Cuban Five—men of principle who are incarcerated in the U.S. today because they dared penetrate the terrorist web of saboteurs centered in Miami and report on their actions.

It is stalwarts like Juan Almeida and now the Cuban Five who are proof that the Cuban Revolution will never surrender. □

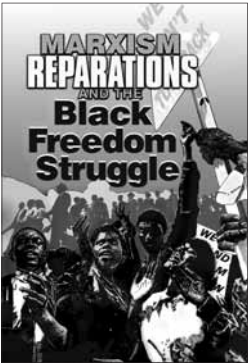


The Committee
to Stop U.S. War
in Colombia/IAC
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MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of
writings from Workers
World edited by Monica Moorehead.
including Larry Holmes, Leilani Dowell,
Saladin Muhammad, John Parker,
Mumia Abu-Jamal, Larry Hales, Imani Henry

www.Leftbooks.com



Workers World’s top 10 reasons Wall Street is celebrating the anniversary of the bailout

1. We can survive on \$750,000 average annual salaries after all ...
2. ... if we get lots of bonus money, too.
3. \$7 trillion doesn’t go nearly as far as you think it does, but it still felt pretty good.
4. Right-wingers love to be our secret rabid pit bulls.
5. We can always blame President You-Know-Who for all our failures.
6. When we gamble with your money, we don’t need a 12-step program.
7. Actually, since consumers are spending so much less, they don’t really need as much consumer protection.
8. We found a new way to take tax deductions on kickbacks to Congress.
9. No matter what we do, more bailout money will always be available.
10. Rules and regulations are for the “little people.”

—Paul Wilcox

‘The sun of freedom’ shall rise

Iraqi shoe thrower released from prison

By Kathy Durkin

The Iraqi people celebrated on Sept. 15 when Muntadhar al-Zaidi was released from a Baghdad jail after nine months in prison. Al-Zaidi is the Iraqi journalist who was jailed on Dec. 14, 2008, after he threw his shoes at U.S. President George W. Bush at a Baghdad news conference where Bush was speaking alongside Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

Al-Zaidi’s actions, which he said were for the “widows and orphans and those killed in Iraq,” were hailed throughout the Arab and Muslim world and among other oppressed peoples and international anti-imperialist forces, all who oppose the U.S.-led war and occupation of Iraq.

After his release, he spoke at Baghdadiya, the television station where he had worked and the site of the news conference where he boldly protested the war.

Al-Zaidi thanked all his supporters in Iraq and worldwide. He explained that what led him to act was the “injustice that befell my people, and how the occupation wanted to humiliate my homeland by put-

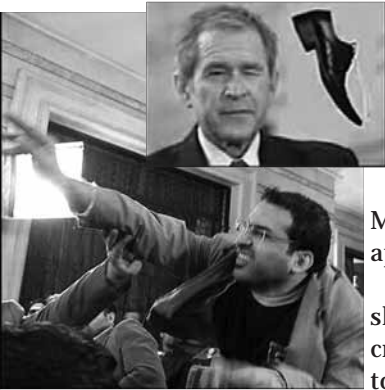
ting it under its boot. ...” He spoke of the million “martyrs” and the millions of orphans, widows, injured Iraqis and displaced homeless.

He said, “Dozens, no, hundreds, of images of massacres [brought] tears to my eyes and wound[ed] me. The scandal of Abu Ghraib. The massacre[s] of Fallujah, Najaf, Haditha, Sadr City, Basra, Diyala, Mosul, Tal Afar, and every inch of our wounded land.”

As a journalist, he said, he saw “the pain of the victims and [heard] ... the screams of the bereaved and the orphans.” He said he felt shame because he was “powerless.”

“The opportunity came, and I took it,” he explained.

“Do you know how many broken homes that shoe that I threw had entered because of the occupation? How many times it had trodden over the blood of



Muntadhar al-Zaidi throws one for Iraq.

innocent victims? And how many times it had entered homes in which free Iraqi women and their sanctity had been violated?

Maybe that shoe was the appropriate response. ...

“When I threw the shoe in the face of the criminal, Bush, I wanted to express my rejection of his lies, his occupation of my country, [and] my rejection of his

killing my people ... his plundering the wealth of my country, and destroying its infrastructure. ...

“All that I meant to do was express with a living conscience the feelings of a citizen who sees his homeland desecrated every day.”

For this he was beaten, tortured and jailed.

Al-Zaidi also criticized Maliki’s deception on his arrest. While on television the prime minister expressed concern about

the journalist’s safety, “[I] was being tortured with the most horrific methods. ...” Al-Zaidi’s screams were heard by journalists at the news conference as he was tortured in the hall’s backyard.

On his release Al-Zaida also called for justice for the hundreds jailed for years without a trial under the occupation. He pledged that his life’s work would now be to assist “all those whose lives were damaged by the occupation.”

He warned that his life is endangered by government and army officials, as he plans to name those responsible for his imprisonment and torture, and by U.S. intelligence agencies “because I am a rebel opposed to their occupation.”

Expressing his steadfast love for his country, Al-Zaidi ended by saying, “If the night of injustice is prolonged, it will not stop the rising of a sun and it will be the sun of freedom.”

Muntadhar al-Zaidi will go down in world history as a people’s hero!

Al-Zaidi’s speech, “The Story of My Shoe,” was translated by McClatchy special correspondent Sahar Issa.

Missile defense systems canceled but—

U.S./NATO militarism expands

By Heather Cottin

On Sept. 17, when President Barack Obama and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that the U.S. was canceling plans to station 10 ground-based interceptor missiles in Poland and a missile radar installation in the Czech Republic, it was no cause for elation. The NATO presence in Eastern Europe is continuing to expand to protect imperial ambitions and military profits.

Any allegations that the U.S. government is bowing to Russian opposition to the U.S./NATO military encirclement of Russia are lies. The U.S. is “strengthening—not scrapping—missile defense in Europe,” said Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. He added that a “fixed radar site like the one previously envisioned for the Czech Republic would be far less adapt-

able than the airborne, space- and ground-based sensors we now plan to use.” (New York Times, Sept. 18)

Czech and Polish responses

Seventy percent of the people of the Czech Republic oppose the construction of the radar bases in their country. (Czech News Agency, April 16). Most Czechs have no wish to be in the center of a theater of war between the U.S. and its NATO allies and Russia.

The costs of military buildup have impoverished a population that once enjoyed free health care, education and a rich cultural life—when Czechoslovakia was part of the socialist camp. The Czechs are reeling from the devastation of privatization and the disappearance of social services. Their GDP has dropped five percent while unemployment is expected to top

ten percent soon. The crisis has allowed more cuts to be made in public budget expenditures. (Czech press survey, Sept. 7)

NATO was planning to build ten missile silos in Redzikowo, Poland. The decision to scrap the bases was greeted with relief. People feared the fact that Russian rockets would be one minute away.

In nearby Slupsk, where unemployment is higher than the national average of 11 percent, some hoped the missile base would help the local economy. (Warsaw Business Journal, April 20, 2009) The global recession has hit Poland hard. Unemployment is expected to increase to 12.5 percent by December. (Forbes, Sept. 7)

Poland is already the site of the largest volume of NATO investment in the world. (Warsaw Business Journal, April 20) Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said that the U.S. has promised

that Poland will be invited to host an element of a new missile defense system. (Xinhua, Sept. 18).

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s Star Wars system is not dead. Since 1985, the U.S. has spent or earmarked more than \$124 billion on the Missile Defense scheme. Nearly \$8 billion has been approved for next year.

The Pentagon has been installing worldwide missile-tracking radar facilities all around the globe. On land and sea, a huge variety of expensive and unnecessary missiles threaten Russia, Iran, China and North Korea.

NATO countries account for 70 percent of worldwide military spending (CIA World Factbook 2008), a drain on all except the military corporation profiteers. Only working-class resistance can challenge the double threat of militarism and recession.

‘Our blades, our power’

Fight for jobs continues at British wind turbine plant

By Martha Grevatt

On its Web site, the Danish firm Vestas boasts of being “number one in modern energy.” The manufacturer of wind turbines has 20 percent of the world market share. Until recently, many might have assumed the company was in the laudable business of saving the environment and creating “green jobs”—the jobs of the future.

That’s what workers first thought when they hired in at the Vestas plant on Britain’s Isle of Wight. Yet the green company revealed its hypocrisy when it consistently ignored skin and respiratory health issues of its own work force. Bosses were belligerent and abusive.

Vestas really showed its true colors this past July when it barely gave a month’s notice that all 600 plant employees would be made redundant—laid off—permanently.

Vestas workers drew worldwide attention when a small group of them took over the plant. Hundreds of their co-workers,

neighbors, and labor and environmental allies maintained an outside presence through the 18-day occupation. When courts evicted the sit-downers on Aug. 12, Vestas management was soon faced with an occupation of a different kind.

Still fighting to save green jobs on the Isle, Vestas workers and supporters have set up two separate encampments. For several weeks, the workers and their supporters, including many concerned about climate change, have been living in tents outside the plant and at the wharf where Vestas intends to load blades onto ships bound for the U.S. Round-the-clock picketing at both sites is being maintained. A steady stream of people from all over Britain has been visiting Newport—the town where the plant is in the process of closing—to show solidarity.

On Sept. 15, four environmental activists locked themselves onto a huge crane that Vestas uses to load the enormous turbine blades. After seven hours, they were arrested and initially faced charges under the British Terrorism Act; the actu-

al charges were reduced to “aggravated trespass.” That same day another group dropped a banner—with the slogan “our blades, our power”—from atop a barge loaded with blades.

“If it weren’t hurting them, Vestas would be able to ignore the blade blockade at the factory in Newport, Isle of Wight,” reports the Save Vestas Web site. “But it is hurting them. They can’t get the remaining blades and valuable equipment out. ...

“On Wednesday the camp at the Marine Gate was served with legal papers stating that the Isle of Wight council considers the blade blockade an ‘unauthorized traveler encampment’ and that they will try to recover the land it is on.

“Meanwhile, while these papers were being prepared, council leader David Pugh spoke to the sacked Vestas workers. Like Vestas he wants the blockade removed, but the workers pointed out that it is their main source of leverage with the Vestas company. Pugh offered to talk to Vestas, and claimed Vestas told

him they have sent letters to the sacked workers about possible reinstatement. The workers have told Pugh that is not true—they have received no letters. Pugh has said that he will speak to Vestas again, this time to Paddy Weir, the plant manager.

“So that’s where it stands: the legal papers are not likely to be processed immediately; before the legal threat is acted on, Vestas has a chance to speak to the Vestas workers. There is every sign that the blade blockade is biting.” (save-vestas.wordpress.com)

In addition, supporters in England, Scotland and Wales have formed committees and held solidarity actions with the Vestas workers.

Demonstrations were held in more than 10 cities on the second National Day of Solidarity on Sept. 17. The Trades Union Congress passed a resolution backing the workers. The Rail and Marine Transport union, which has adopted the previously unorganized workers at Vestas, submitted the resolution. □

El discurso de Obama

El debate sobre el cuidado de la salud y el racismo

Por David Hoskins

El Presidente Barack Obama se dirigió al Congreso durante una sesión conjunta el 9 de septiembre en un esfuerzo por revivir el proyecto de ley demócrata sobre la reforma de salud. El discurso de Obama fue pronunciado después de semanas de ataques racistas durante los foros celebrados en varias partes del país, combinados con demagogia y distorsiones por parte de políticos y comentaristas derechistas que amenazaban con hundir cualquier reforma y forzaron a los demócratas a retirarse de la “opción pública”.

Dos fuerzas estaban detrás de los ataques y distorsiones. La industria de seguros de salud demostró su empeño por derrotar cualquier tipo de reforma, aún una reforma paulatina, contradictoria e insuficiente, que podría potencialmente amenazar una minúscula porción de sus ganancias multimillonarias. Mientras tanto, en un intento por desviar una lucha multinacional unitaria en contra de la crisis económica, una sección de la clase gobernante ha expuesto su voluntad de incitar una reacción racista usando a Obama como chivo expiatorio por la peor crisis desde la Gran Depresión.

Obama explica claramente las prioridades demócratas

En lenguaje unas veces intenso, Obama describió la situación de quienes no tienen suficiente o ningún seguro, luchando diariamente por un cuidado de salud básico en el país más rico del mundo. Con palabras fuertes, Obama, describió con precisión el espectáculo de tácticas de miedo y debates deshonestos, las posturas políticas de poca visión y el predominio de un ambiente de confusión que ha rodeado la reforma del cuidado de salud.

Fue sólo cuando Obama enfocó su atención hacia los detalles de cómo sería la propuesta demócrata sobre la reforma de salud, que se hizo patente que algo andaba mal. El describió un plan similar al que ya se aprobó por cuatro comités en el Congreso bajo control del Partido Demócratas. Al hacer esto, la administración dio su apoyo a un plan sumamente inadecuado que costaría \$900 mil millones de dólares en un período de diez años, forzando a individuos sin cobertura de seguro a comprarlo, y restringiendo la cobertura de la opción pública a menos

del 5% de la población. La Oficina del Presupuesto Congressional previamente había estimado que este tipo de reforma dejaría al final 17 millones de personas sin seguro.

En su discurso, Obama dejó claro que el plan de salud Demócrata no provee cobertura a los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as y no provee fondos federales para los servicios de aborto. Esta desafortunada posición sobre los derechos médicos de las mujeres e inmigrantes llega en un tiempo cuando el mismo Obama se encuentra bajo ataque por parte de la extrema derecha, la cual ha optado por usar el racismo en su contra para socavar la más pequeña oportunidad de una reforma.

Exabrupto racista durante discurso del Presidente

El representante republicano de Carolina del Sur, Joe Wilson intentó interrumpir a Obama gritando: “¡Tú mientes!” cuando el Presidente aseguraba al Congreso que los/as indocumentados/as no iban a recibir cobertura. El hecho mismo de que Obama se sintió obligado a destacar la exclusión de los/as inmigrantes indocumentados/as es una clara muestra de la atmósfera viciosamente racista en Washington.

El exabrupto de Wilson refleja ese racismo.

La columnista del New York Times Maureen Dowd, denunció a Wilson y al establecimiento racista en su columna del 12 de septiembre: “Rodeado de hombres blancos de mediana edad, como foto añeja de los días en que tales politiqueros manejaban a Washington como su propio club, Joe Wilson le gritó “¡Tú mientes!” a un Presidente que no mentía. Pero sea justo o no, lo que escuché fue una palabra no dicha en el aire: ¡Mientes, muchacho!” [Nota editorial de MO: Esta es la manera irrespetuosa en que los racistas le hablaban a las personas adultas africanas-americanas antes de las luchas sobre derechos civiles de los años sesenta].

Dowd explica cómo Wilson pertenecía a los Hijos de Veteranos de la Confederación y dirigió una campaña para mantener la bandera de la Confederación [los estados secesionistas y esclavistas del sur de los Estados Unidos durante la Guerra Civil] en el Capitolio del estado de Carolina del Sur en el 2000. Las credenciales reac-

cionarias de Wilson no están en duda, y Dowd estuvo correcta en su afirmación de que su exabrupto estaba rociado de racismo.

Manifestación reaccionaria en Washington exige una respuesta

El impulso para transformar la indignación legítima sobre el desempleo, las ejecuciones hipotecarias y los rescates bancarios de la actual crisis económica en una reacción racista contra Obama se manifestó el 12 de septiembre en una marcha en Washington organizada por Freedom Works, una organización derechista presidida por el ex líder de la mayoría republicana de la Cámara de Representantes, Dick Armey.

Estimaciones precisas de la participación son difíciles de obtener; los medios de comunicación han estimado desde cientos, a miles, hasta decenas de miles de personas. Algunos/as conservadores como la ex comentarista de Fox News Michelle Malkin, se han tenido luego que abochornar por haber reportado falsamente que millones de personas acudieron a la manifestación racista.

Oradores y asistentes denunciaron el gasto público y los rescates bancarios. Obedeciendo a la línea de la industria de seguros de salud, muchos oradores falsamente arremetieron contra el plan demócrata pintándolo como si el gobierno fuera a asumir el control de la atención de la salud. El tono a menudo reflejaba racismo y sexismo cuando oradores criticaban ferozmente en varias ocasiones al presidente Obama y a la Presidenta de la Cámara de Representantes, Nancy Pelosi.

El mitin es una prueba de que una pequeña, pero ruidosa ala de extrema derecha se ha organizado para promover su programa reaccionario y bloquear cualquier posibilidad de reforma. Este movimiento político derechista se ha sentido alentado por la ausencia de un movimiento de izquierda unido y fuerte en este país.

El Presidente Obama tuvo un mitin al estilo de su campaña electoral en Minnesota el mismo día del evento de Washington. Se estima que 15.000 personas asistieron a este mitin que varias veces fue respondido con gritos de “¡Sí se puede!” por parte de la audiencia.

Asambleas como esta, auspiciadas por el Partido Demócrata, ciertamente son

mejores que un silencio total frente a los furiosos ataques de la derecha, pero no pueden de ningún modo sustituir la acción militante de las masas en las calles.

Solamente un movimiento de los/as trabajadores/as empleados/as y desempleados/as que aboga por un programa de empleos con salarios justos, “Cuidado de salud de ‘Medicare’ para todos/as” (Medicare for All), y una moratoria en los despidos, ejecuciones hipotecarias y evicciones, puede hacer añicos esta reacción racista. La Marcha Nacional para Empleos del 20 de septiembre y el Campamento de Casetas en Pittsburgh es un primer paso importante hacia esta dirección.

La reforma del cuidado de salud y la revolución

Los/as revolucionarios/as no se deben intimidar por los exabruptos racistas ni por las distorsiones de la industria de seguros. Más de 50 millones de personas que viven dentro de los Estados Unidos no tienen seguro de salud. Otras 25 millones no tienen suficiente cobertura. Las crisis radicales como esta del cuidado de salud requieren soluciones radicales.

Los/as revolucionarios/as toman en cuenta la necesidad inmediata de reformas y la lucha a largo plazo por la revolución cuando formulan demandas al sistema. Demandas mínimas y máximas son el resultado de este proceso.

“Medicare for All” es una demanda mínima apropiada en este período. Es una demanda que corresponde a la consciencia de los/as trabajadores/as y responde a la crisis del cuidado de salud. Medicare for All es un sistema de “un único pagador” de seguro nacional de salud que organiza el financiamiento de los servicios de salud a través de una sola agencia pública y elimina a las compañías de seguros privadas como árbitros de quién recibe o no un tratamiento adecuado. Ha sido propuesto en el Congreso como la ley H.R. 676.

Medicare for All representa una demanda inmediata que arreglaría algunos de los problemas más evidentes del cuidado de salud, pero lo que los/as trabajadores/as verdaderamente necesitamos es un sistema humano de cuidado de salud que elimina totalmente las ansias de ganancias desde el financiamiento hasta la práctica del servicio.

Esta demanda máxima de la clase trabajadora requiere del socialismo para que se realice. La medicina socialista, como la que existe en Cuba, es un sistema financiado y administrado públicamente. Los hospitales y clínicas son operados democráticamente y los/as médicos/as y enfermeros/as trabajan como empleados/as públicos/as. La producción de farmacéuticos y equipo médico son empresas públicas creadas para cumplir con las necesidades del pueblo.

Medicare for All es lo que se debe exigir ahora. Solo el socialismo puede responder últimamente a las necesidades de cuidado de salud de los/as trabajadores/as. □

LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS



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